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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/872,990	05/31/2001	Owen P. Ward	2570LI-1	3149

22442 7590 12/11/2002

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EXAMINER

HRUSKOCI, PETER A

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
1724	11

DATE MAILED: 12/11/2002

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/872,990	WARD ET AL.
Examiner	Art Unit	
Peter A. Hruskoci	1724	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 October 2002.

2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-28 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) 20-28 is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-19 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.

If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.

12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

13) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All b) Some * c) None of:

1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

14) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).

a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

15) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____ .

2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)

3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____ . 6) Other: _____ .

Art Unit: 1724

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1-8 and 11-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Christy et al. 5,013,458 in view of Burnham 5,275,733 and McMahon. Christy et al. disclose (see col. 3 line 13 through col. 5 line 68) a method for treating sewage sludge substantially as claimed. The claims differ from Christy et al. by reciting that the sludge is maintained at the pH for at least one day or chemicals are added to contribute to viscosity reduction, and the sludge is subjected to physical shearing or disintegration. Burnham disclose (see col. 4 lines 1-33, and Example 1) that it is known in the art to maintain the pH of the sludge at least 12 and add sodium and potassium chloride to the sludge to reduce pathogens and alter the conductivity of the sludge, respectively. McMahon disclose (see col. 5 line 53 through col. 6 line 17) that it is known in the art to subject sludge to shearing to aid in reducing the viscosity of the sludge. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the method of Christy et al. by maintaining the pH, adding the recited chemicals, and subjecting the sludge to shearing in view of the teachings of Burnham and McMahon respectively, to aid in reducing pathogens, altering the conductivity, and reducing the viscosity of the sludge. The

Art Unit: 1724

specific sequence of steps utilized and the use of a continuous procedure, would have been an obvious matter of process optimization to one skilled in the art, depending on the specific sludge treated and results desired, absent a sufficient showing of unexpected results.

3. Claims 9 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Christy et al. in view of Burnham and McMahon et al. as above, and further in view of Roslonski. The claims differ from the references as applied above by reciting the addition of an oxidizing agent. Roslonski disclose (see col. 3 line 54 through col. 4 line 43) that it is known in the art to add an oxidizing agent to dewatered sludge to aid in sterilizing the sludge. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the references as applied above by adding an oxidizing agent to the sludge in view of the teachings of Roslonski, to aid in sterilizing the sludge.

4. Applicant's election without traverse of Group I, claims 1-19 in Paper No. 10 is acknowledged. The restriction requirement is made final.

5. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Peter A. Hruskoci whose telephone number is (703) 308-

Art Unit: 1724

3839. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. David Simmons, can be reached on (703) 308-1972. The fax phone number for this Group is (703) 872-9310 (non-after finals) and 703-872-9311 after finals.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.


Peter A. Hruskoci
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1724

P. Hruskoci
December 10, 2002